

Robert L. Schuyler, ed. *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America: Afro-American and Asian American Culture History*. Baywood Monographs in Archaeology, No. 1. (Farmingdale, New York: Baywood Publishing Company, 1980) 147 pp., \$6.00.

Robert Schuyler, Associate Curator in charge of the American Historical Archaeology Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, believes that archaeologists have too often avoided working with Afro-American and Asian American sites and have not effectively used interdisciplinary sources to interpret patterns in the archaeological record. The fourteen articles in *Archaeological Perspectives* attempt to remedy such concerns but, perhaps in part because of the newness of this interest, the selections are of uneven quality.

The five articles on the Chinese, the only "Asian" Americans treated in the book, are straightforward and generally good. William Evans ("Food and Fantasy: Material Culture of the Chinese in California and the West 1850-1900") and Patricia Etter ("The West Coast Chinese and Opium Smoking") are sound archaeological analyses of aspects of Chinese-American culture, but they cite little corroborative background documentation from contemporary written records. Paul Langenwalter ("The Archaeology of 19th Century Chinese Subsistence at the Lower China Store, Madera County, California") provides a cursory overview of non-archaeological sources, before demonstrating that culinary wares, techniques of production, and the food used by Chinese-Americans were traditional but undergoing some acculturation by the 1880s. Lagenwalter, although reporting that some locally-bred meat, Anglo canned foods, and Anglo table wares had made their appearance in Chinese homes, concludes that the level of acculturation was minor. He is supported in that contention by Roberta Greenwood, whose excellent article, "The Chinese on Main Street," shows us how historical and archaeological approaches can be appropriately blended. Greenwood astutely uses newspaper accounts, maps, manuscript sources, and archaeological evidence to conclude that the Chinese maintained themselves in relative cultural isolation for thirty years or more. Only the types of toys their children played with demonstrated any degree of Anglo influence, as food choices and preparation, herbal medicines, games, coins, and ritual celebrations remained distinctively Chinese.

The portion of the book on Afro-Americans is less well done. Even the extent to which African cultural patterns existed at a wide range of sites is unclear.

John Soloman Otto's interesting article "Race and Class on Antebellum Plantations" points out that planters and overseers were similar in their styles of housing, tableware, and the amount of meat in their diets, while slaves and overseers consumed the same animals and used the same style of serving bowls. Yet, Otto does not tell us what to make of all this and fails to provide the reader with documentary evidence which might illuminate social relations of race and class.

Leland Ferguson ("Looking for the 'Afro' in Colono-Indian Pottery") maintains that Afro-American slaves, not Indians as has been previously suggested, "made much, if not most of the Colono Ware we see in the archaeological record" of the South. But Ferguson does not really explain how the simultaneous existence of such pottery among the Indians and blacks came about. Did both groups independently originate the pottery or did one copy the other?

There are similar unanswered questions posed by Vernon Baker's article "Archaeological Visibility in Afro-American Culture: An Example from Black Lucy's Garden, Andover, Massachusetts." Baker concludes that an indigent black woman of the early nineteenth century constructed her house and prepared her meals in an African style. He recognizes that Lucy Foster's Africanisms may only be a reflection of poor white patterns but nevertheless, without sufficient evidence, he connects his findings to African, not indigent, roots.

Sarah T. Bridges and Bert Salwen's work at Weeksville, a once prosperous black community (ca 1830-1870) in what is today a part of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section, is noteworthy not for its discoveries but for its technique. A small group of black residents and college students scoured maps, property compilations, census records, and material remains to find out more about Weeksville. This approach has important implications, for it demonstrates that motivated community residents can effectively do research on their own locality--that scholarship can, in effect, be democratized.

The remaining selections on Afro-Americans come up rather short because, while they are strong on the historical evidence concerning two black communities in New York and one in Boston, the archaeological record at these sites is too incomplete, at present, for any conclusions--they merely whet our interdisciplinary appetite about how black communities and institutions rose and fell.

The last essay in this work, "Approaches to Ethnic Identification in Historical Archaeology" by Marsha and Roger Kelly, is extremely valuable. It spotlights some of the difficulties in dealing with material culture to describe changes in the "subtler or inner aspects of culture." Moreover, the Kellys convincingly assert that only by testing documentary evidence against the archaeological record can we derive a very accurate view of what occurred.

All in all, Robert Schuyler may have been wiser had he waited until further research is in before he published *Archaeological Perspectives*. Although the selections on the Chinese are useful to demonstrate what types of Chinese cultural patterns were retained in the West, the bibliographies and articles on Afro-Americans are not adequate enough to stir much interest, except in the ranks of prospective archaeologists who might wish to learn where work is being done. Schuyler's goals are admirable; his choice of articles is generally not up to them.

Lyle Koehler
University of Cincinnati